

# Meditations on Gardening

We were enclosed, O Eternal One, within the GARDEN of Your Breast!  
You drew us out of Your holy mind like a FLOWER

Catherine of Siena



**ENVIRONMENT:** Arrange chairs in circle. Have a vase in the middle with flowers, enough for each participant to have one at the end.

## Introduction

**Leader** God has planted within each human being a seed of hope that, if properly nurtured, grows into a confidence that all will be well, all manner of things shall be well. The breath of God reaches into even the smallest and most remote garden and human heart and infuses life.



Gardening and the spiritual life are very much alike. Evelyn Underhill has commented in her writings that there are appropriate and inappropriate ways of cultivating both the earth and the spiritual soil of our lives.

Inheriting Paradise: Meditations on Gardening by Vigen Guroian

## God's Creation

### Reader 1

*"The idea that a good vigorous campaign with a pitchfork is the best way of extirpating tiresome weeds from a herbaceous border is the one we most have to unlearn. We plunge in, toss the ground violently in every direction, pluck out the weeds, make a big pile, and retire in a state of moist satisfaction saying we've done a very good morning's work. But have we? We've disturbed the roots of the best perennials. We've knocked off some shoots. We've grubbed up loads of little modest seedlings...and in our hurry, we've broken weeds and left the bottom half of their stems in the ground to start vigorous life again."*

The Ways of the Spirit by Grace Adolphsen Brame

### ALL

I felt myself a tiny speck of life  
standing, awed,  
before God's creation.

### Reader 2

I saw the vast sky meeting  
the shining waters and, beyond,  
clusters of trees huddling  
in the folds of rolling hills.

The beauty stretched  
into oblivion  
into God,  
Who first breathed it into being  
And as I stood transfixed  
before the mighty work  
of our planet,  
I knew  
God breathed there still,

in every drop of water,  
in every blade of grass,  
and in every clump of earth.

### ALL

Coursing through every tree  
God's grace,  
driven life force,  
flowed  
in endless longing to create.

Edwina Gateley

### Reader 3

The Christian gardener respects the fact that God appoints each soul to be *"the sort of garden it is to be."* *"Your job,"* Underhill admonishes, *"is strictly confined to making your soul as good as it can be of its sort."* Some of us will be contemplative in the manner of a rose garden, and others are more earthy and restless, like a potato patch.

Adapted from "Lenten Spring: the Christian Gardener" by Vigen Guroian

### ALL

*"It is not important for a garden to be beautiful in everyone's eyes. But it is extremely important for the gardener to think it is a fair substitute for Eden."*

Henry Mitchell

### Reader 4

It is important for the Christian gardener to see beauty in the garden of the self. The model of our perfection is Beauty and Goodness itself, but the particular aspect of that beauty might depend upon what sort of garden a person is to be.

Vigen Guroian

ALL

Blessed is the one  
for whom Paradise yearns,  
Yes, Paradise yearns  
for the one whose  
goodness makes one beautiful.

St. Ephrem, *Hymns of Paradise*

## Growth

**Leader** Paradise waits for us to grow into plants that bear beautiful flowers and fruits of compassion and love.

Vigen Guroian

### Prayer (ALL)

Be a gardener.  
Dig a ditch,  
toil and sweat,  
and turn the earth upside down  
and seek the deepness  
and water the plants in time.

Continue this labor  
and make sweet floods to run  
and noble and abundant  
fruits to spring.  
Take this food and drink  
and carry it to God  
as your true worship.

Julian of Norwich

**Leader** In John 15, Jesus tells us: *“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in Me and I in you, you will bear much fruit.”* God is the gardener and caretaker of the vineyard. As a gardener, God takes great care to prepare the best environment for the vines, for us,



to grow and bear fruit. Every gardener plants a garden with the expectation of beautiful flowers or ripe fruit.

The fruit that is produced is a testimony to the love and care of the gardener, as well as the sustaining power of the vine from which the branch receives its nutrients. All people are branches designed by God to be fruitful. The fruit we bear comes from God and the work of the Holy Spirit in us. Remaining in God’s love keeps us connected to the Divine Gardener and invites us to an ever loving and deepening intimacy with our Creator.

Jesus, the True Vine

## A Blessing of Beauty

*(Alternate sides, right side beginning)*

May you be blessed with a sense  
of beauty, And may beauty  
come and visit your life.

May you be given the grace of  
recognition so that you may learn  
to see in a new way all that  
is beautiful about you.

In the light of that beauty may  
you gain a new respect for the  
Eternal that is alive in your  
feeling, thought, and action.

May you look again at the icon of  
your own face. And may you see  
there the tender  
and poignant  
presence of an  
intimacy  
that is beautiful.

When you  
turn your gaze  
inward may it be



a kind and healing gaze. May you  
be gifted to be gentle  
so that the shy beauty, that hides  
in so many of the chambers  
of your heart, may come out and  
gather and focus to make a bouquet  
of blessings around your head  
and around your life.

May you look reverently at those  
that are close to you and if you  
have forgotten in their familiarity  
the beauty that is about them  
may you learn to see it again.

And may you celebrate  
with those you love  
the beauty that brought  
you together.

May you also enrich your soul  
with the beauty of great art  
and great music.

May you take your clay home,  
your body, out into the  
generous world of nature and allow  
the longing of your senses to unfurl  
across the magnificent beauty  
which the Divine Imagination  
offers to your imagination.

May you seek the truth but may  
you always remember to walk hand  
in hand with beauty because beauty  
is truth and truth is beauty.

John O'Donohue in *The Divine Imagination*

## Acknowledgments

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